



Decision Memo

City of Walla Walla Radio Repeater Project

**USDA Forest Service
Umatilla National Forest
Walla Walla Ranger District**

Columbia County, Washington

Background

The City of Walla Walla manages the municipal watershed to provide potable water for the City of Walla Walla. Much of the watershed is on National Forest land and the Forest Service works with the city in the watershed's management. The watershed is a rugged basin of about 26,700 acres with a peak elevation of 6,250 ft. above sea level at Table Rock which is located at the eastern end of the basin. The watershed has been managed under a cooperative agreement between the Forest Service and the City of Walla Walla since 1918. Public entry into the Mill Creek Watershed is restricted and entry is by permit only. The Forest Service maintains a fire lookout at Table Rock. Two-way radio communications in the watershed for the city are marginal and in much of the basin there is no two-way radio coverage for the city's two-way radio system. The city has used Forest Service radio equipment in the past but would like to operate and maintain their own two-way radio repeater to provide two-way radio coverage for the city's radio system. The City of Walla Walla proposes to install a radio repeater at Table Rock lookout utilizing the existing Forest Service solar panels and batteries at the lookout. They will install their repeater equipment in the ground floor room of the lookout and install an 1 ½ inch diameter x 64 inch tall omnidirectional antenna on the west side of the lookout. There will be no ground disturbance associated with the project.

Decision

I have decided to issue a special use permit to the City of Walla Walla to authorize the installation and operation of a two-way radio repeater at Table Rock lookout. The special use permit will be issued for a term of 20-years and will be renewable.

The repeater equipment will be installed in the ground floor space of the Table Rock Lookout, and will utilize the existing solar panels on the roof and batteries in the ground floor space of the lookout for power. The antenna will be installed on the west face of the lookout and will be connected to the repeater by coax cable.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA). The applicable category of actions is identified in agency procedures as *Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than 5 contiguous acres of land* 36 CFR 220.6(e)(3). This category of action(s) is applicable because the existing overhead powerlines are all in established corridors.

I find that there are no extraordinary circumstances that would warrant further analysis and documentation in an EA or EIS. I took into account resource conditions identified in agency procedures that should be considered in determining whether extraordinary circumstances might exist:

- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species – There are no Federally listed TES species within the project area.

A no effect determination has been given to the Federally listed plant *Silene spaldingii* because it does not occur and there is no habitat for it within the project area. A no impact determination has been given for all sensitive plant species listed on the Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List (RFSSL) because none of these species are known to occur within the proposed project area. (Botany Report)

The project would have no effect on any ESA fish species and no impact on USFS Region 6 Sensitive fish species because no project activities would occur near any streams containing listed fish species. (Fisheries Report).

The project would have no effect on any ESA listed terrestrial wildlife species and/or their habitat. A not impact determination has been given to all sensitive species with the (Wildlife Report)_

- Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds – The project will not have any effect on any floodplain, wetland, or municipal watershed. (Hydrology Report, located in project record).
- Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas – The project area does not contain any congressionally designated wilderness, wilderness study areas, or national recreation areas (Final EIS, Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Appendix C).
- Inventoried roadless areas or potential wilderness areas – No activities occur within the boundaries of Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) or Potential Wilderness and thus there is no effect on either from this action.
- Research natural areas – The project does not occur in a research natural area (Final EIS, Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, p. 4-31).
- American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites – No information on locations or concerns of religious sites has been made at this time. Consultations with local Tribes is ongoing.
- Archaeological sites, or historic properties or areas – An appropriate inventory has been conducted for this project. All known sites will be avoided. Should any additional sites be identified during ground disturbing activities Forest archaeology staff would immediately be notified.

Public Involvement

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Umatilla National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis. Additionally, project scoping and 30-day comment periods were conducted and were initiated by letter requesting public input



dated March 31, 2016. No public input was received regarding this project during the 30-day comment period.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision is consistent with the *Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan)*, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and Record of Decision (ROD) dated June 11, 1990 and all subsequent NEPA analysis for Forest Plan amendments. The project was designed in conformance with the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

The project is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Executive Order 11988, Executive Order 11990, and other applicable laws (See Project Record). There is no prime farmland, rangeland or forestland within the project area.

The project is consistent with the *Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation FEIS*, its *Mediated Agreement and 1988 Record of Decision*, and the *Pacific Northwest Region FEIS for the Invasive Plant Program and 2005 Record of Decision*.

The project incorporates by reference the *Umatilla National Forest Invasive Plant FEIS and its Record of Decision (2010)*. The Invasive Plant FEIS documents the effects of various means of invasive plant treatment. These treatments include chemical, mechanical, and manual methods. The document set forth a list of known invasive plant sites that are in need of treatment and also created a system, known as Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR), whereby newly discovered sites may be added to the list of treatable sites after being reviewed using an established matrix. Any rapid response to invasive plant spread identified during the implementation of this project will utilize the EDRR process and the associated analysis and methodology that support it found within the Invasive Plant FEIS.

Administrative Review (Appeal) Opportunities

In accordance with regulations found at 36 CFR 215.12 (e)(1), this decision is not subject to administrative appeal.

Implementation Date

Project implementation can begin immediately

Contact

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Jeff Bloom, Project Leader, or Deanna Engelmann, Acting District Environmental Coordinator at the Walla Walla Ranger District, 1415 W. Rose St., Walla Walla, WA 99362 or call 509-522-6290 for further information concerning this project.


GENEVIEVE MASTERS
Forest Supervisor

8-17-16
Date



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